

PRESENTATION OF THE INTERCULTURAL SCHOOLS IN GREECE: PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL AND CITIZENSHIP ISSUES?

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Abstract: *In the present paper intercultural and citizenship education is described in the Greek educational setting. More specifically, the presentation of the intercultural and citizenship education in Greece is organized around four axes; the organization of the educational system in Greece, the relative educational legislation, the National Curriculum as well as the reference to teaching approaches and practices that teacher use to implement intercultural and citizenship education based on research undertaken. The aforementioned axes are presented, discussed and compared both at a theoretical and practical level.*

Keywords: *intercultural, citizenship, legislation, teaching practices*

1. A description of the Greek educational system

Education in Greece is divided into three levels (Aiginitou-Panagiotidou, 1983). The first level includes primary school with a six-year attendance. Children enter primary school when they are six years old³². Thirteen of these primary schools, which are spread all over Greece, are designated as intercultural primary schools because more than 40 per cent of the pupil population consists of foreign pupils. Some of the primary schools, either mainstream or intercultural primary schools, work as 'All day schools'

³² However, pupils' school life in Greece may start when they are two and a half years old (pre-school education) in infant schools, either state or private, and continues in kindergarden, either state or private, when they are five years old.

(Ολοήμερα σχολεία > Oloimera sxoleia) and have an extended timetable and enriched curriculum³³.

Among these primary schools there are 221 primary schools situated in West Thrace in Greece designated as ‘minority primary schools’, which accommodate pupils of the Muslim minority. Minority primary schools operate as bilingual schools since the curriculum is divided into two languages; the Greek language and the Turkish language. Greek Language, History, We and the World (study of the environment), Geography, Social and Political Education are taught in the Greek language by Greek teachers. The study of the Turkish language, Mathematics, Physics, Art and PE are taught in Turkish by Turkish teachers³⁴. The school principal comes from the minority group and the vice-principal from the majority. Unfortunately, pupils who attend minority primary schools do not have the chance to continue their attendance in a high school of the same pattern and this constitutes a reason for their abandoning school or for their poor performance in mainstream high schools because all subjects are taught in Greek. There are only two minority high schools founded in West Thrace, which obviously cannot accommodate all pupils of the minority (Cummins, 2002; Spyridakis, 2002; Magos, 2004; Katsikas, 2005; Askouni, 2006).

The second level is divided into the lower level which includes high school (lower high school) and the upper level which includes Likeio (Λύκειο > Likeio). High school demands a three-year attendance which is obligatory including attendance in primary school; that is education in Greece is obligatory for all children from 6 to 15 years old. Nine of these high schools are designated as intercultural high schools and they are situated all over Greece. The upper second level of education includes two types of schools; the unified Likeio (Ενιαίο Λύκειο > Eniaio Likeio) and the Technical Professional Schools (Τεχνικά επαγγελματικά εκπαιδευτήρια > Technika epaggelmatika ekpaideutiria) with a two-year or a three-year attendance. There are four intercultural Likeio all over Greece³⁵ (www.minedu.gov.gr).

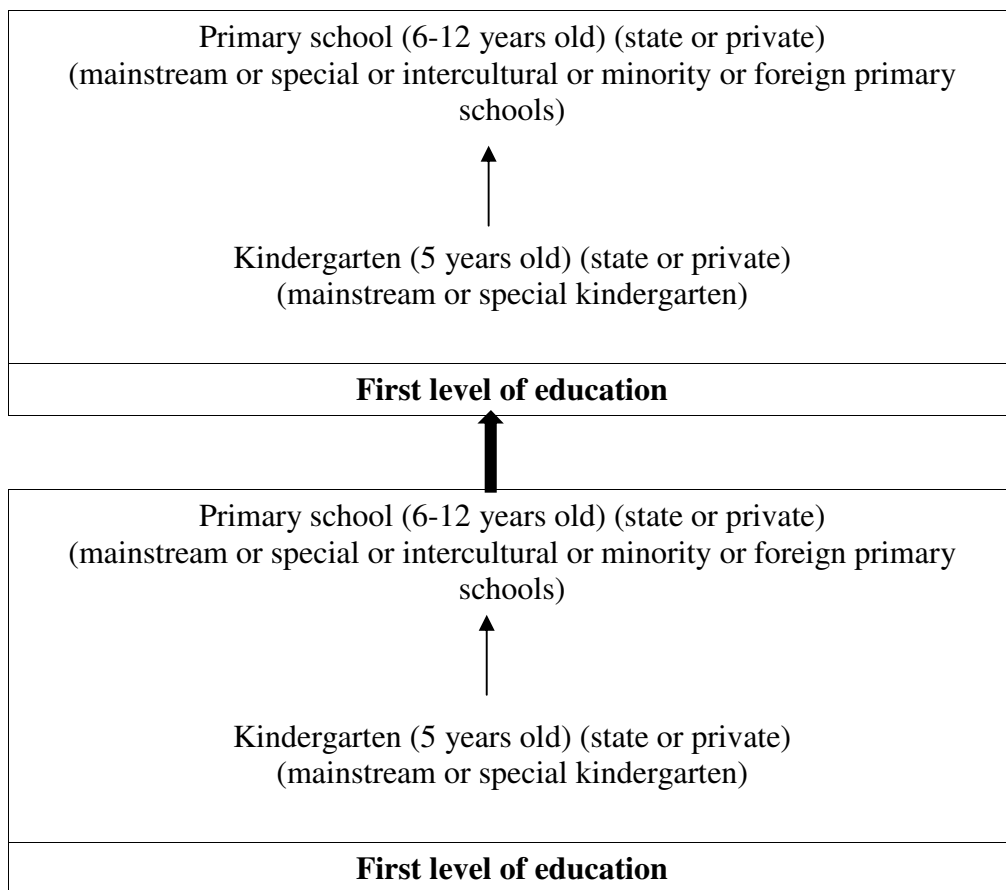
³³ Pupils stay in the school until 4.15 in the afternoon, where they eat their lunch and attend extra lessons, such as ICT, English foreign language, PE, Art.

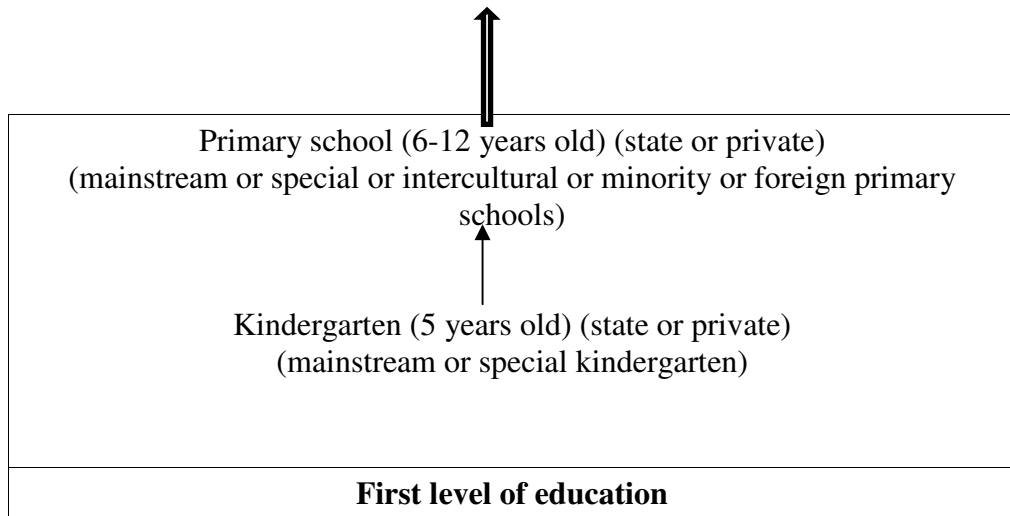
³⁴ The school books for the subjects which belong to the Greek or the Turkish curriculum are produced with the responsibility of the Greek or the Turkish educational authorities respectively (Askouni, 2006).

³⁵ Parallel to mainstream schools in the first and the second level kindergarten, primary schools, high schools and lyceum of special education operate for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Furthermore, there are both state and private kindergarten, primary schools, high schools and lyceum in the Greek educational system.

In relation to intercultural education at this point it should be mentioned that except from the intercultural primary schools and intercultural high schools in Greece there are foreign schools with a foreign curriculum, such as the Polish school, foreign schools with a Greek curriculum and schools with both a Greek and a foreign curriculum, such as the Armenian school (Nikolaou, 2000; Charalambous, 2005). The third level of education is divided into University and Technological Professional Institutions. Pupils' entrance in these institutions depends on their performance in national exams which take place on the second and third year of Lyceum (www.minedu.gov.gr). A general schematic presentation of the three levels of the Greek educational system is provided below.

1. A general schematic presentation of the Greek educational system





(Tsaliki, 2012)

2. The first steps towards migrant education

In 1983 both reception classes and intensive classes (Φροντιστηριακά τμήματα >frontistiriaka tmimata) were legislated for and the Ministerial Decision Φ2/378/Γ1/1124/1994 published in 1994 includes all the necessary information regarding the foundation and operation of reception classes and intensive classes. More specifically, the operation of reception classes demands a minimum of nine and a maximum of seventeen pupils. They operate as parallel classes which help pupils to adjust themselves to the mainstream class. Each student attends it for two hours at the most daily, mainly in language subjects. Reception classes are divided into those for newcomers and those for advanced learners. In reception classes for newcomers, Greek is taught intensively for one year. In reception classes for advanced learners a mixed programme of internal and external support in the Greek language is offered in the mainstream classes for two years. The ministerial decision makes also provision for the employment of teachers for teaching the language and the culture of the pupils' country of origin in reception classes. Intensive classes are additional classes, they operate after the end of the school for a maximum of eight hours weekly with minimum of three and maximum of eight pupils and they are attended by pupils who have previously attended the reception classes and still face difficulties with the Greek language. Parental consent for pupils' attendance of reception classes or intensive classes is necessary. Although in the beginning both types of classes were founded for repatriate pupils according to the ministerial decree in 1994 these classes can be attended by foreign pupils, as well. (Markou, 1997; Nikolaou, 2000; Kontogianni, 2002; Goupos, 2005; Palaiologou and

Evaggelou, 2005; Sfakakis, 2007). Reception classes and intensive classes operate as compensatory measures for the education of foreign and repatriate pupils. They constitute an assimilation educational policy as they focus on the intensive instruction of the Greek language.

In 1999, the Ministerial decision Φ10/20/Γ1/708/1999 modifies and enriches the operation of reception classes and intensive classes in order to be in keeping with the spirit of intercultural education. However, these alterations contradict the basic principles of intercultural education. They still aim to integrate pupils into the Greek educational system. Pupils are supported in order to learn the Greek language, whereas no provision was made for the preservation and teaching of their first language and culture (Kontogianni, 2002; Sfakakis, 2007).

2.1 Law 2413/1996

Greek education abroad, intercultural education and other regulations

Law 2413/1996 of 1996 titled ‘Greek education abroad, intercultural education and other regulations’ laid the foundations for intercultural education in Greece. More specifically four articles of the law (articles 34, 35, 36, 37) refer to the aim of intercultural education as well as the foundation, operation and administration of schools of intercultural education. Article 34 states that ‘the aim of intercultural education is the organisation and the operation of primary schools and high schools for the provision of education to young people with special social, educational and cultural needs. Further to that, according to this law, schools of intercultural education can be founded either with the consent of the Minister of Education or the initiative of local administrative authorities, religious institutions and charities.

Additionally, the chance is provided to other state schools including ‘Schools of Repatriates’ to change into intercultural schools. In intercultural schools the curriculum of state schools is applied and it can be adjusted to the needs of pupils. Special curricula can also be applied with the addition of supplementary or alternative subjects validated by the National Ministry of Education. Moreover, the number of pupils in each class can be reduced. As regards the teaching staff they need to have the appropriate qualifications in order to work in intercultural schools and they are allowed to have reduced working hours due to the special circumstances existing in those schools. However, this is not the case for all teachers working in intercultural schools. As it will be further analysed below there are teachers who have qualifications relevant to intercultural education and who wished to work in those schools. Nonetheless, other teachers have been allocated to these schools by the National Ministry of Education according to their contractual

status and their length of service. These factors affect teachers' ability to state preferences or to remain in or leave a school and this is the process followed for teachers' allocation in schools in Greece in general. Finally, it is stated that intercultural education in Greece and related issues will be supervised by the Institute of Education of Greeks Abroad and of Intercultural Education which is found under the auspices of the National Ministry of Education. Nowadays, this institute has been closed and it has been replaced by the office of the Education of Expatriates and of Intercultural education which constitutes a part of the National Ministry of Education. Two years after the enactment of the law according to the Ministerial decision Φ10/35/Γ1/1058/1998 of 1998 six state primary schools transformed into intercultural schools (Law 2413/1996; Spyridakis, 2002; Sfakakis, 2007).

Law 1234/1996 constitutes a very important step towards the institutional recognition of the need of the implementation of intercultural education in Greece. The regulations regarding teachers' reduced working hours and their qualifications as well as the readjustment of the curriculum are moves in the right direction. However, some other points of the law regarding intercultural education seem to be vague and unclear (Spyridakis, 2002; Emmanuil, 2006). First of all, the law presents pupils attending intercultural schools as having a deficit. It does not define the educational, social and cultural needs of pupils, the presuppositions for the change of state schools into intercultural schools and the qualifications of the teachers working in the schools. Secondly, no mention is made regarding the teaching material used and the specific role of the Institute of the Education of Greeks Abroad and of Intercultural Education is not clarified (Kontogianni, 2002; Spyridakis, 2002; Sfakakis, 2007). It would be wiser if the regulations of this law regarding intercultural education constituted a common educational policy for all schools and for both native and foreign pupils. The establishment of separate intercultural schools constitutes a segregationist educational policy with the potential danger of the existence of separate minority schools, which in turn may reproduce/perpetuate the social exclusion of those pupils (Spyridakis, 2002; Emmanuil, 2006; Sfakakis, 2007). The Greek Government has designated certain schools as 'intercultural schools'. However, the key issue involves the implementation of intercultural education in multicultural schools, as the term 'intercultural education' is used to describe interactions between different and diverse groups in multicultural schools or societies; and policies and practices in public bodies, social institutions and schools. Such measures have the express purpose of enhancing intercultural understanding and to obviate intercultural conflicts which can occur in unequal multicultural societies.

3. The National Curriculum

According to the new National Curriculum for kindergarten, primary school and high school teaching design and teaching practices should ensure the maintenance of national identity and of cultural heritage, the cultivation of the European citizen identity as well as the equality of chances to education for all pupils regardless their gender, for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and skills as well as for pupils with special educational and linguistic characteristics. It seems that the National Curriculum takes into consideration the needs of foreign and repatriates pupils accommodated in schools in Greece as well as the unique cultural identity of each pupils either she/he belongs to native pupils or other cultural groups. The New National Curriculum is accompanied by the Interdisciplinary Unified National Curriculum. According to its basic principles and taking into consideration the Greek educational reality knowledge can be offered by the separate school subjects. However, as its very same title denotes learning may take place by the use of an interdisciplinary approach, especially in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. According to this approach, a topic is selected which is approached from different aspects which draw on several areas of the curriculum (Morrison, 1994). Research undertaken in Greek educational settings reveals that teachers believe that this approach is appropriate to be used, especially with foreign and repatriated pupils (Nikolaou, 1999; Palaiologou & Evangelou, 2012; Tsaliki, 2012).

4. The intercultural schools in Greece

As the table below shows the intercultural schools of primary and secondary education are spread all over Greece. There is no official reference to explain why these particular schools were designated as intercultural schools. They were designated as intercultural primary schools after the enactment of Law 2413/1996 on intercultural education and after each headteacher's application to the local educational authority, as more than 40% of the pupil population in each of these school consisted of foreign pupils. However, during that period of time there were schools which accommodated a large number of foreign pupils, but the headteachers did not wish the schools to be renamed as intercultural schools. Table below provides the geographical position of the 13 intercultural primary schools as well as the geographical position of the 13 intercultural high schools (Lower

high school) and likeia³⁶ (Upper high schools) across Greece. In this part some important information regarding the composition of the pupil population and the history of the regions in which some of the intercultural primary schools are situated are going to be discussed, so that readers can have a more complete picture of the diversity of the pupil population in the schools which may inform their better understanding of intercultural education in Greece.

More specifically, in Komotini³⁷, northern Greece, there are two intercultural primary schools in the area. Except from native pupils, the schools accommodate a number of repatriate pupils, mainly from the ex-Soviet Union, and foreign pupils with a Turkish origin because the region adjoins Turkey. There are also a significant number of Roma and Pomaki pupils who are Muslim.

Also in the north of Greece, in Thessaloniki, there are five intercultural primary schools situated in the wider region, which except from native pupils, accommodate repatriate pupils from the ex-Soviet Union and foreign pupils mainly from Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Syria and Armenia. It is notable that in four of the five primary schools there are Roma pupils. In two of those, which share the same play yard, the largest number of pupils is Roma and this has turned those schools into ghettos. In one of the intercultural primary schools situated in the centre of Thessaloniki, named previously 'School of children of Greek repatriates and foreigners', the second language spoken is German, although the composition of the pupil population has changed since when foreign pupils coming from Balkan countries were accommodated in the school (Kontogianni, 2002; Nikolaou, 2002).

As regards the three intercultural primary schools situated in Athens, they constitute two separate cases. Two of the schools consist mostly of foreign pupils coming from a lot of different countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, France, England, USA, Ghana, Canada, India, Jordan, Nigeria, Burundi, China, Thailand, Philippines etc.) and repatriates from the ex-Soviet Union. There are a very small number of native pupils in the schools, which leads to the question of how intercultural education can be implemented if there are almost no native pupils in the schools. It could also be said that these schools have evolved into disproportion between foreign and native pupils. As it has also been discussed above these two intercultural primary schools were previously named 'Schools of repatriates'. Due the composition of the pupil population at that time the second language taught was English and this has

³⁶ Likeia (Likia > Λύκεια) is the plural number of Likeio (Likio> Λύκειο).

³⁷ The city of Komotini belongs to the wider region named Rodopi (Ροδόπη).

not changed since then, although the name of the school has changed (Kontogianni, 2002; Nikolaou, 2002). In the last of the three intercultural primary schools in Athens there are a very small number of foreign pupils coming from Albania, Romania and Poland as well as a small number of Christian orthodox natives. The vast majority of the pupil population is Muslim with a Turkish origin. About 10,000 Muslims of Turkish origin live in the region, where the school is situated. They moved from west Thrace, where they used to live, in the centre of Athens after the Government's suggestions in order to find better jobs (Lytra, 2007).

In western Greece, in the centre of the city of Ioannina, there is the one and only intercultural primary school in the region in which the research was conducted. There are a number of native pupils in the school. However, the largest part of the pupil population consists of foreign pupils from Albania, because the city is adjacent to Albania. Greek parents are negative about enrolling their children in the school due to the Albanian pupils attending the school, therefore, the school is tending to evolve into a disproportionate number of foreign and native pupils. Finally, in southern Greece, in the city of Chania (Crete), in the intercultural primary school there seems to be a balance in the pupil population, since it consists of native, foreign and repatriate pupils. However, there is no intercultural primary school of secondary education in the region. Similarly, there is no intercultural school to cover the educational needs of foreign or repatriate pupils in the wider region of Peloponnese and this raises questions on how systematic and organized the change of mainstream schools to intercultural schools was.

Summarizing, the repatriate pupils attending the intercultural primary schools come from the ex-Soviet Union (Georgia, Kazakstan, Moldavia, Russia, Armenia, Ukraine). Their ancestors were of Greek origin and when the Soviet Union collapsed they decided to return to their country of origin (Kokkinos, 1991; Palaiologou, 2000). The largest number of repatriate pupils from the ex-Soviet Union are gathered in the schools in northern Greece, in Komotini and Thessaloniki, because they were guided into those regions when they arrived in Greece³⁸. The foreign pupils of the schools mainly

³⁸ It is supported the view that Greek state intentionally guided repatriates into the northern part of Greece, because they wanted to reinforce the Greek population, especially in the region of Thrace. More specifically, 44% of the population in Ksanthi and 66% of the population in Rodopi are Muslims (Spyridakis, 2002).

come from countries which are adjacent to northern Greece and their parents decided to emigrate to Greece due to war as in the case of Yugoslavia or due to the political situation as in the case of Albania, Bulgaria and Romania (Markou, 1996, 1997; Charalambous, 2005). The exceptions are the two primary schools in Athens, which accommodate pupils from more countries, and where they were previously named ‘Schools of children of Greek repatriates and foreigners’, as mentioned above. Five of the schools accommodate Roma pupils and the schools in Komotini, in northern Greece, have the particular characteristic of accommodating Muslim pupils of Turkish origin and Pomak pupils who are also Muslim (Markou, 1997; Cummins, 2002; Askouni, 2004, Magos, 2004). One of the intercultural primary schools in Athens also accommodates mainly Muslim pupils of Turkish origin (Lytra, 2007).

5. **he geographical position of the intercultural schools in Greece**

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6. **Intercultural and citizenship education**

Undoubtedly, we need to implement citizenship education in schools in order to build political participation, to counter prejudice and xenophobia, to challenge social exclusion and, to develop understanding of legal and human rights (www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk; Gundara, 2015). Especially, after 1990 the massive influx of economic immigrants in Greece in combination with the return of Greek repatriates made the population of the country more diverse and this is reflected in the pupil population (Markou, 1996, 1997; Gotovos and Markou, 2003; Charalambous, 2005; Tsaliki, 2015). Therefore, both native and foreign pupils living as future citizens need to be educated on how to live peacefully (Miliou, 2011) and in cohesion in a multicultural society, developing empathy and flexibility towards other persons, mutual respect and appreciation of other cultural groups and of the cultural identity of each person separately (Olneck, 1990; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Cordeiro, 1997; Fennes and Hapgood, 1997; Zografou, 1997; Pantazi, 1998; Katevas, 1998; Batelaan and Gundara, 2000). However, the aforementioned goals among others also constitute the seeking outcome of the implementation of intercultural education in schools. In this sense, it could be argued that citizenship and intercultural education share some goals which can be fulfilled by their implementation in schools.

Taking into account that intercultural education is based on dialogue, interaction (Fennes and Hapgood, 1997) as well as on the discovery of similarities and differences (Monasta, 1997) recent research has shown that teachers working in the intercultural primary schools in Greece use a number of teaching approaches and techniques towards the establishment of an intercultural and citizenship dimension in education (Tsaliki, 2012). First and foremost, they argue that the appropriate psychological climate and ethos should be cultivated in the classroom and in the school, in general. According to them this is imperative if we want foreign and repatriate pupils to feel comfortable and happy to come to the school. They add that great importance needs to be attributed to the development of interpersonal relationships which take place within the framework of the hidden curriculum, which must not be underestimated and overlooked (Dreeben, 1969; Jackson as cited in Gordon, 1982; Apple, 2004). Therefore, one of the teachers underlines that the socialisation of those children needs to constitute a priority. Besides, speaking in pedagogical terms it is commonly accepted that a child needs to feel comfortable enough in the school before any formal learning starts taking place. Teachers also stress the importance of their behaving equally to all pupils irrespective of their origin and their special personal characteristics as well as the importance of their establishing trust between themselves and their pupils. As Shinn (1972) indicates the establishment of a strong positive teacher–pupil relationship influences the performance of pupils, especially those with cultural differences.

Some of the teachers make reference to the importance of having effective cooperation with pupils' parents (Tsaliki, 2002; Antonopoulou, 2011) in order to be able to implement intercultural education. It has been proved that the strong parent-child relationship influences the latter. Therefore, teachers could use this strong relationship positively towards pupils' learning (Education and Culture, 1986; McGee Banks, 2004). According to teachers the empowerment of all pupils' and especially of foreign and repatriate pupils' cultural identity is at the centre of intercultural education. If pupils feel that their cultural identities are accepted and collaborative teacher-pupil and pupil to pupil relationship is developed, then they will work harder in order to progress (Cummins, 2000; Scheter and Cummins, 2003). As teachers state they use a number of teaching approaches in order to empower their pupils. They encourage pupils to use their first language in the classroom (Fotopoulos, 2010). They also encourage the parents to speak with their children in their first language at home and in the neighbourhood for psychological reasons. They believe that pupils' first language constitutes a part of their personality and by not allowing them to use it feels like rejecting the children themselves (Dimitroff, 1972). Additionally, some other teachers also underline that the comparison of pupils' cultures, aiming at raising awareness of similarities and differences between different cultures or different cultural identities, is sought with every chance provided during teaching (Hoffman, 1996; Holquist, 1981; Corbett, 2003).

Furthermore, teachers suggest that arranging pupils working in groups is beneficial for all pupils (Leung and Franson, 1989; Markou, 1999; Nikolaou, 1999; Verikaki, 2003; Miliou, 2011; Tsaliki, 2012). Cooperation is developed between the members of the group and children acquire autonomy at the same time by the assignment of a specific task in their group (Allport, 1954 as cited in Slavin, 1985; Hallinan and Teixeira, 1987). Additionally, foreign and repatriate pupils may feel more comfortable to expose their weaknesses within the group instead of in front of the whole class. Working in groups constitutes a great chance for pupils to get to know each other better. It is also an opportunity for native pupils to reduce their possible prejudice towards pupils coming from other countries (Houlton, 1996; Monasta, 1997; Kaldi, 1999; Nikolaou, 1999), especially if the members of each group change from time to time. Group work may be more effective by the use of the interdisciplinary approach, as teachers denote (Tsaliki, 2012). It constitutes one more method which can be used in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms; because it offers pupils the chance to use their potential in at least one subject, providing that the topic selected has different cultural dimensions (Morrison, 1994; Nikolaou, 1999; Ovando et al., 2003; Kontogianni, 2002; Athanasiadou, 2005; Miliou, 2011; Tsaliki, 2012).

Finally, in some of the intercultural primary schools of the research, not only the importance of the establishment of an intercultural dimension in all aspects of school life but also the transmission of this intercultural dimension in the wider society is stressed (Perroti, 1994; Batelaan and Van Hoof, 1996; Besalu, 1997; Grant, 1997; Monasta, 1997; Georgogiannis, 1999; Kaldi, 1999; Kontogianni, 2002; Tsaliki, 2012). The presentation of all the aforementioned celebrations to the local community is a very good chance on the one hand for natives to come in contact with the different cultural groups that live in the region and to get to know some aspects of their culture, and on the other hand for foreigners and repatriates to present themselves and their culture in front of a wider audience, thus conveying the message that their culture is of equal value and that it deserves to be acknowledged (Tsaliki, 2012).

7. Some thoughts and questions

Teachers working in the intercultural primary schools discuss their lack of formal training on issues of intercultural education and the demographic data obtained from questionnaires of recent research (Tsaliki, 2012) confirmed that more than 50% of the teachers do not have any further qualifications on intercultural education or related issues. According to the ministerial decision Φ.361.23/159/Δ1/5271 of 1997 teachers asking to transfer to intercultural schools need to have sufficient knowledge of the mother tongue of the majority of foreign pupils accommodated in the school. Moreover, they need to have further qualifications in education such as training in issues of teaching Greek as a second language, postgraduate studies in education in general or in intercultural education, attendance at conferences or seminars relating to intercultural education and teaching experience in reception classes or intensive classes. However, ten years after the enactment of those laws, when the research was undertaken, teachers keep on referring to these unresolved problems which constitute an issue that needs to be re-examined, although the law takes provision for those issues. At the moment the implementation of intercultural education is mainly based on teachers' personality, their sensitivity, their broadmindedness, their own individual will and their self-education (Tsaliki, 2012). Further to that, there are schools which accommodate either only native pupils or native, migrant and repatriated pupils and they are not designated as 'intercultural schools'.

In this sense, the questions rising with regard to the implementation of intercultural and citizenship education in Greece relate to whether systematic and continuous in-service training on intercultural/ citizenship education and related issues could be offered to all teachers and whether intercultural

dimension in education should be implemented only in the schools designated as ‘intercultural schools’.

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